

Testimony and Call to Ministry

I grew up in a home with a Christian mom and a dad who was not a follower of Jesus. Because of this, mom made sure we stayed plugged in to our local church (First Baptist Church in Richmond Hill, GA). Even though I would have been considered by many to be a "good" kid, I was far from God. And then one day, at the age of fourteen, God graciously saved me. Through the faithful preaching of the Word, God showed me that I was a broken and rebellious sinner in desperate need of His saving grace in my life. The good news of the gospel absolutely gripped my heart and changed my life forever. Knowing that I was completely and fully known in all my sin and shame and still completely loved by God was exactly what brought me to repent of doing things my way and turn back to Christ trusting him as the only Lord and Savior of my life. What Jesus did for me through His virgin birth, perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection gave me new life. God radically saved me that evening and adopted me into His eternal family and, by His grace, I have been seeking to follow Him closely ever since.

About a year later, God called me to preach the gospel. I remember that evening very clearly. It was during a Sunday evening worship service at my local church. I was sixteen. On this night, God awakened in me a call to preach His word. As my pastor proclaimed God's Word, the Spirit was churning inside me and grabbing me in a way that I could not resist. God told me that night that he was going to use me to preach the gospel and that I would spend my life serving Him and doing that in vocational ministry. We had a typical Southern Baptist invitation after the preaching at the church I grew up in and I felt compelled to go tell my pastor what God had called me to that evening. But, first, I needed to stop by and let my earthly father know what my heavenly Father had called me to. My earthly father was not a follower of Christ at the time but he still came to church to appease mom and he enjoyed church league softball. I knew clearly in that moment that my Heavenly Father's plans for my life were far greater than my earthly father's. So, during the invitation, without saying a word to him, I just walked over to my earthly dad, grabbed him by the hand, and cried for a moment. I then went and told my pastor what God had called me to. I do not remember exactly what I said, but it was something like this: "I believe God has called me to preach. I don't know how or when or what it will look like, but I know I am supposed to give my life to this call. The bottom line is that the gospel has gripped me and this good news is way too good for me to not spend my life proclaiming it to a broken and needy world." While the path forward was not always as expected, I have been pursuing and fulfilling that call ever since. As He promised, God has always been faithful. I really knew nothing of what God has called me to at that point and twenty years later I am still learning so much. Here's what I know. To be called to preach the word of God and shepherd the people of God is a high, holy, and humbling calling. It's hard work. It's rewarding work. It's worth it to bring glory to God and good to those who I get the honor of shepherding and preaching to.

Since then, I have had the privilege to serve King Jesus in various roles over the last 20 plus years of life and ministry. I started serving in vocational ministry as an intern in multiple ministries. As an ordained minister, I have been honored to serve in full-time vocational ministry in three different churches as a pastor. Even more important than my call to preach, was the call God gave me to be a husband to my amazing wife Jordan and a father to our five amazing children (Lucy - 10, Gideon - 8, Abraham - 7, Judah - 4, and Brookelyn - 2). After my relationship with my Heavenly Father, my role as husband and father are my top priorities in ministry. Without those being healthy, there is no place for pastoral ministry (or any other kind of ministry) in my life.

I am only the man I am today because of the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in me. I know the only hope I have of being a faithful husband, father, shepherd, and friend is by constantly looking to and trusting in Jesus with every area of my life. As John the Baptist said in John 3:30, Jesus must continue to increase and I must continue to decrease. He truly has gripped my heart and I simply want to play my role in His grand story well. As Paul encourages in 2 Timothy 2:21, my desire is to be a useful vessel in the hands of our Master and be used by Him to get the gospel to as many people as possible.